

Let's put the Toyota furor in perspective.

Since the inception of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act in 1966, more than 390 million cars, trucks, buses, recreational vehicles, motorcycles, and mopeds have been recalled to correct safety issues

Very few of these recalls have involved Toyota, which has a sterling reputation for quality. Toyota's reputation is so high, and major problems with its cars so rare, that the current recall is being played in the media like a "man-bites-dog" story.

Recalls are an unfortunate but fairly common part of the manufacturing process; all automakers have recalls.

The real story today is how quickly Toyota identified the problems, found a solution, and delivered that solution into the hands of its dealers worldwide; those dealers are installing it now, working overtime; some even working 24/7.

That is a remarkable commitment to quality and customer service from the 172,000 Toyota company and dealership employees in the USA and those elsewhere in the world - from all aspects of management, production and manufacturing, to dealers and their sales and service employees.

Toyota has become as thoroughly an American company as the so-called "domestic" manufacturers. The Cars.com American-Made Index of 2009 named the Toyota Camry as the Top American-Made Car, a factor based on sales, where the car's parts are made and whether the car was assembled in the United States. In total, four Toyota models made the top ten list. In addition, four Toyota models made their 2009 list of top ten U.S.-built cars with the highest domestic-parts content.

So, why all this furor over Toyota?

The short answer is this is what happens when the federal government gets into the car business, and owns one of the competitors. The federal government owns GM; the company's second largest shareholder is the United Auto Workers.

The longer answer involves the imminent closure in March of the unionized NUMMI plant in California, as the United Auto Workers try to force Toyota to keep the plant open - with a unionized workforce.

A Time magazine story published August 28, 2009, sets the stage:

Last Auto Plant in California Shut by Toyota

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